

NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Suspends Testing of Suspected Swine Flu Cases in Ward County *Department Will Focus Testing on Area Patients Who Are Hospitalized*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Because North Dakota Department of Health surveillance indicates that the new H1N1 influenza virus, also known as swine flu, is established in Ward County and being transmitted from person to person, the Department of Health will conduct laboratory testing only on suspected cases in Ward County that are hospitalized, according to State Epidemiologist Kirby Kruger.

Of the 18 probable and confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza reported in North Dakota, nine are from Ward County. The cases include a variety of age groups, from preteens to older adults.

“Suspending routine testing in Ward County will allow us to focus on identifying cases throughout the state,” Kruger said. “We know swine flu is in the community; therefore, the most important things people can do to slow the spread of the disease are to cover their coughs and sneezes, wash their hands often, and stay home if they are sick.”

The H1N1 virus has been causing illness similar to seasonal influenza in terms of severity and length of illness. All of the cases in North Dakota thus far have recovered or are recovering at home. None have been hospitalized. However, like seasonal influenza, the new H1N1 virus can cause severe illness and even death in some cases.

Symptoms of H1N1 infection include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle and body aches, headache, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting. Most people recover at home, and medical care isn't always needed.

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Anyone who is ill or caring for someone who has symptoms of influenza should follow these recommendations:

- Check with your health-care provider if you are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma or emphysema.
- Check with your health-care provider if the ill person is 65 and older or younger than 5.
- Check with your health-care provider about whether you should take antiviral medications.
- Stay home for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill.
- Seek medical attention for any of the following warning signs:
 - Difficulty breathing or chest pain.
 - Purple or blue discoloration of the lips or skin.
 - Vomiting and inability to keep liquids down.
 - Signs of dehydration, such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or, in infants, a lack of tears when they cry.
 - Seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions).
 - Confusion or being less responsive than normal.

Any future changes to laboratory testing criteria will be posted on the department's website at www.ndhealth.gov.

For more information about the new H1N1 influenza virus, contact your local public health unit or visit the North Dakota Department of Health website at www.ndhealth.gov.

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